



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## AGENDA ITEM

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

NORA VARGAS  
First District

JOEL ANDERSON  
Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER  
Third District

VACANT  
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND  
Fifth District

**DATE:** September 26, 2023

**07**

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

### **SUBJECT**

**AUTHORIZATION TO ACCEPT CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTIVE SPENDING PROJECT GRANT FUNDING ADMINISTERED BY THE SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION FOR MOBILE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAMS (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

### **OVERVIEW**

To support the well-being of those with behavioral health conditions, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) and the County of San Diego (County) Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) remain committed to investing in services to meet the needs of this vulnerable population. In alignment with this commitment, County HHSA, Behavioral Health Services (BHS) continues to pursue new funding opportunities to enhance and expand access to critical mental health and substance use disorder prevention, engagement, and treatment services.

In February 2023, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) began accepting non-competitive applications for a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) in response to Congressional Directive Spending Projects in SAMHSA's Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriation. Within the NOFO, the County was identified as a prospective applicant for \$4,480,000 of available grant funds for the "mobile behavioral health crisis response team" program. In April 2023, BHS submitted the application for these grant funds and on September 7, 2023, SAMHSA notified BHS of a conditional award.

Today's action requests authorization to accept this one-time grant funding award for the period of September 30, 2023, through September 29, 2024, to continue expansion of the Mobile Crisis Response Teams designed to help people who are experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis by dispatching behavioral health experts to emergency calls. Additionally, today's action requests the Board to authorize the department to waive the Board Policy B-29 requirement for full cost recovery associated with the one-time grant funding, as the public benefit of this project far outweighs the B-29 unrecoverable costs.

This item supports the County's vision of a just, sustainable, and resilient future for all, specifically those communities and populations in San Diego County that have been historically left behind, as well as our ongoing commitment to the regional *Live Well San Diego* vision of healthy, safe,

**SUBJECT:** AUTHORIZATION TO ACCEPT CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTIVE SPENDING PROJECT GRANT FUNDING ADMINISTERED BY THE SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION FOR MOBILE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAMS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

and thriving communities by enhancing innovative programs that connect individuals with behavioral health needs to the best level of care.

## **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

### **CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

1. Waive Board policy B-29, Fees, Grants, Revenue Contracts – Department Responsibility for Cost Recovery, which requires full cost recovery for grants.
2. Authorize the acceptance of approximately \$4,480,000 of one-time Congressional Directive Spending grant funds administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration for the period of September 30, 2023, through September 29, 2024, and authorize the Agency Director, Health and Human Services Agency, or designee to execute all required documents, upon receipt, including any annual extensions, amendments, or revisions that do not materially impact or alter the services or funding level.

## **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The vision of the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services (BHS), is to build a system in which mental health and substance use services are equitably and regionally distributed and accessible to all individuals and families within the region who are in need. In pursuit of this goal, BHS is committed to pursuing funding sources that will support the provision of services to vulnerable and underserved populations including those with serious mental illness (SMI). In 2021, according to the California Health Interview Survey conducted by the University of California Los Angeles, one out of every ten San Diego County residents reported experiencing serious psychological distress in the past month. However, residents living below 200% of the federal poverty level, those who reported a history of incarceration, or who identified as black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, or multiracial were more likely to report serious psychological distress. Additionally, 2021 data from the California Department of Healthcare Access and Information show that black residents utilize the emergency department (ED) for SMI-related encounters at a rate that is 145% higher compared to others. The Mobile Crisis Response Teams (MCRT) helps reduce these disparities by responding to individuals in crisis, offering an alternative to the ED or potentially jail. To date, from January 2021 to July 2023, MCRT has responded to over 6,500 calls, with the majority of clients served identifying as a racial/ethnic minority.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

This item supports Sustainability Goal #2 and Sustainability Goal #4 – to provide just and equitable access to County of San Diego services, policy decision-making, and resource allocation in support of sustainable communities and to protect the health and well-being of everyone in the region. Mobile Crisis Response Teams (MCRT) provide an alternative response to law enforcement for individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis and further expansion of the program ensures that clinical teams can reach historically underserved communities who may avoid seeking assistance from law enforcement during a time of crisis. By securing additional funding for the

**SUBJECT:** AUTHORIZATION TO ACCEPT CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTIVE SPENDING PROJECT GRANT FUNDING ADMINISTERED BY THE SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION FOR MOBILE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAMS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

MCRT, this item supports the expansion of the regional network of crisis services enabling people to access care near their networks of support.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-25 Operational Plan in the Health and Human Services Agency. If approved, this action will result in estimated costs of approximately \$3,420,548 in FY 2023-24 and \$1,139,981 in FY 2024-25, and revenues of approximately \$3,360,000 in FY 2023-24 and \$1,120,000 in FY 2024-25 to enhance Mobile Crisis Response Teams services offered through contracted community-based providers. The funding source is one-time Congressional Directive Spending (CDS) grant funds administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration funds totaling approximately \$4,480,000 for the period of September 30, 2023 through September 29, 2024.

For the CDS grant program, a waiver of Board Policy B-29 is requested because the funding does not offset all costs associated with the administration of the grant funds of approximately \$60,548 in FY 2023-24 and \$19,981 FY 2024-25. The anticipated funding sources for these costs are Mental Health Services Act and Realignment. The public benefit of providing these services far outweighs the unrecoverable costs and maximizes grant funds used to implement the project. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

### **BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

### **ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

At their regular meeting on August 3, 2023, this item was presented to the Behavioral Health Advisory Board as informational.

### **BACKGROUND**

To support the well-being of those with behavioral health conditions, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) and the County of San Diego (County) Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) remain committed to investing in services to meet the needs of individuals. In alignment with this commitment, County HHSA, Behavioral Health Services (BHS) continues to pursue funding opportunities to enhance and expand access to critical mental health and substance use disorder prevention, engagement, and treatment services.

In February 2023, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) began accepting non-competitive applications for a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) in response to Congressional Directive Spending (CDS) Projects in SAMHSA's Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriation. Within the NOFO, the County was identified as a prospective applicant for \$4,480,000 of available funds for the "mobile behavioral health crisis response teams" program upon submission of a proposal outlining how the funds will be used and in April 2023, BHS submitted the application for these funds. On September 7, 2023 SAMHSA notified BHS of a conditional award of \$4,480,000 of non-competitive CDS grant funding.

**SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION TO ACCEPT CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTIVE  
SPENDING PROJECT GRANT FUNDING ADMINISTERED BY THE  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES  
ADMINISTRATION FOR MOBILE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAMS  
(DISTRICTS: ALL)**

On March 26, 2019 (2), the Board adopted recommendations to develop a plan to strengthen the response to individuals with behavioral health needs, which resulted in the creation of the initial Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) program that launched in January 2021 in the HHSA North Coastal Region of San Diego County and was expanded in phases throughout 2021 to serve individuals throughout all other regions of the county.

The MCRT program provides non-law enforcement, clinician-led, field-based crisis intervention services to individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis. Teams are comprised of licensed mental health clinicians, case managers, and peer support specialists who can respond to behavioral health crisis calls that do not involve known threats of violence or medical emergencies. These teams provide assessments, de-escalation, and, if needed, will connect, and transport the individual to appropriate services such as counseling, case management, and substance use treatment services. MCRT services are available countywide, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and serve individuals of all ages.

From January 2021 through July 2023, MCRT has responded to over 6,500 calls made through the San Diego Access and Crisis Line and referrals from law enforcement agencies. Countywide call volumes have steadily increased throughout the duration of the program, requiring additional resources to support optimal oversight and meaningful client outcomes. MCRTs divert individuals experiencing a crisis from unnecessary law enforcement involvement by instead stabilizing the client in the field and, if appropriate, connecting the client to the right level of behavioral health care. Of the calls MCRT has responded to, an estimated 51% of individuals were stabilized in the field and provided with referrals to ongoing care without the need for additional transport, thus reducing the need for law enforcement services and utilization of more expensive, acute services.

Today's action requests authorization to accept this one-time grant funding award for the period of September 30, 2023, through September 29, 2024, to continue expansion of MCRT, including on nights and weekends, which will be operationalized through amendments to contracts with the community-based providers that offer MCRT services. Additionally, today's action requests the Board to authorize the department to waive the Board Policy B-29 requirement for full cost recovery associated with the one-time grant funding. The public benefit of expanding the MCRT far outweighs the B-29 unrecoverable costs and allows for the maximization of grant funds for expansion of the MCRT program to support individuals of all ages who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis in being connected to the care they need.

**SUBJECT:** AUTHORIZATION TO ACCEPT CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTIVE  
SPENDING PROJECT GRANT FUNDING ADMINISTERED BY THE  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES  
ADMINISTRATION FOR MOBILE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAMS  
(DISTRICTS: ALL)

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Today's proposed actions support the County of San Diego's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan initiatives of Equity (Health) and Community (Quality of Life) by reducing disparities and disproportionality of individuals with mental illness and substance use disorders by enhancing innovative programs that connect individuals with behavioral health needs to the best level of care.

Respectfully submitted,



HELEN N. ROBBINS-MEYER  
Interim Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

N/A